

**RESEARCH ARTICLES (1)**  
**WHY A SHROUD?**  
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It can be reasonably stated that the most frequently asked question concerning the Shroud of Turin has remained unchanged for long centuries... 'Is it real?' In asking this we are also exploring attendant questions: 'Is it Jesus, is it 'proof' of scourging, crucifixion, death, resurrection even?' Many authors have examined these questions from the perspectives of historical and scientific enquiry, discovering and uncovering much that is fascinating and to my mind very strong evidence of authenticity. Not of course that type of authenticity which can prove it is Christ's image on the Shroud, much less His resurrection, as those are matters of faith and lie beyond the ability of history and science to certify. We should note however that our acceptance of potential truths and professed facts rests very much upon our own worldview, that which we think ought to be and that which we would like to be, an observation well noted by the poet who wrote:

Ah Love! could thou and I with Fate conspire,  
To grasp this sorry Scheme of Things entire  
Would not we shatter it to bits - and then,  
Re-mould it nearer the Heart's desire! <sup>(1)</sup>

After over thirty years of Shroud study my response to the question of authenticity is to say, as I have done so many times to myself, 'How can it not be?' I believe that gives a fair account of where I stand in relation to the Shroud and for some years now the question I also find myself asking is why an imaged Shroud at all? To begin such a response I believe we have to recognise the fact that to understand the Bible and Jesus we must first of all remember that the Bible originated in the Middle East. One of the most lamentable and impoverishing aspects of western hermeneutics past and present has been the wilful neglect of the Jewish roots of the New Testament. Our approach to hermeneutics is unavoidably coloured by our worldview, our own culture, and also our

own personal limitations and prejudices. The early spread of the gospel throughout the Greco-Roman world resulted in the steady erosion of the essential 'Jewishness' of the scriptures to whom they were first given. It was not long until artistic representation began to depict Jesus and other historical biblical personages as white Europeans, and Platonic and Aristotelian ideas began to encroach upon scriptural analysis and exegesis. Later revisions were to prove catastrophic for the Jews at the hands of western 'Christians' whose pogroms and atrocities were perceived as justifiable due to ignorant and cynical manipulation of scripture. In pursuing a misconstrued and self-justificatory gospel that marginalised the Jewish origins of the scriptures the church thereby removed itself further from the rich soil of prophetic interpretation and understanding.

Here in the west we usually perceive Biblical prophecy to be simply a series of divine forewarnings of that which is yet to be and a reflection on that which has been fulfilled. This popular notion has been the general understanding taught by Christian churches for most of the past two thousand years. Anti-Semitism has it that most things Jewish, if not all, are suspect, and this too often has been the unfortunate response to those Christians who would have looked deeper into the Jewish roots impacting faith and understanding. This was obviously not the approach taken by St Paul, who studied under Gamaliel, the grandson of Rabbi Hillel. Hillel is regarded as the foremost sage of the Second Temple period and is credited with forming the original seven points called midoth, which form the basic principles of Midrash. As Chuck Missler writes in his article *Midrash Hermeneutics*, 'The western mind views prophecy merely as prediction and fulfilment. The Jewish mind saw prophecy as a pattern being recapitulated, where a pattern of events illustrates a thematic replay in the future.'<sup>(2)</sup> My article will examine this essentially Jewish understanding of prophecy with its analysis of events, thematic replays, and also the Midrashic sensitivity to typological pattern with regard to the Turin Shroud.

In his article Missler investigates the remarkable series of similarities that occur in the lives of Christ and Joseph, son of the biblical Jacob. For many believers in the factual historicity of the Bible such similarities are not accidental or coincidental but examples of typology that show how the life of Jesus was prefigured in the experiences of Joseph, and how events in the life of Jesus shed understanding on why Joseph experienced as he did. Missler informs the reader that there are, according to Arthur Pink, over one hundred ways that show Joseph is a 'type' of the Messiah to come. I shall examine only some of these insofar as they touch upon my thesis that the Turin Shroud owes itself to the life of Joseph but all will show there exists a definite and profound linkage between Christ and the Old Testament patriarch. As you read please bear in mind Missler's explanation of the Jewish midrashic understanding of prophecy as also a pattern being established and illuminating a thematic replay in the future. Joseph, as the beloved son of his father, was betrayed into the hands of the gentiles by his brethren, who despised him for his prophetic gift that foretold he would rule over them. Joseph's dreams of sun, moon and stars, and sheaves of corn plainly announced he was to be elevated above not only his brothers but also his father and mother too, Jacob later being seen as the father of all Israel. The country and its people of course inherited the very name Israel from Jacob. Likewise Jesus was betrayed by his brethren into gentile hands because his brothers the Jews would not accept his pre-eminence over them. Joseph was ultimately betrayed by Yehudah (root name of Judas) for twenty pieces of silver, the price of a slave. Jesus was betrayed by Judas for thirty pieces of silver, the price of a slave in first century Israel. Both shared their imprisonment with two criminals. In prison with Joseph were Pharaoh's chief butler and chief baker, one was pardoned and one was executed. Jesus was crucified alongside two criminals, one who died and one who was pardoned; 'Verily I say unto thee, To day shalt thou be with me in paradise' (Luke. 23:43).

Joseph asked the butler to remember him upon his release and return to Pharaoh; the pardoned malefactor asked Jesus to remember him when 'thou comest into thy kingdom.' Upon release Joseph was taken

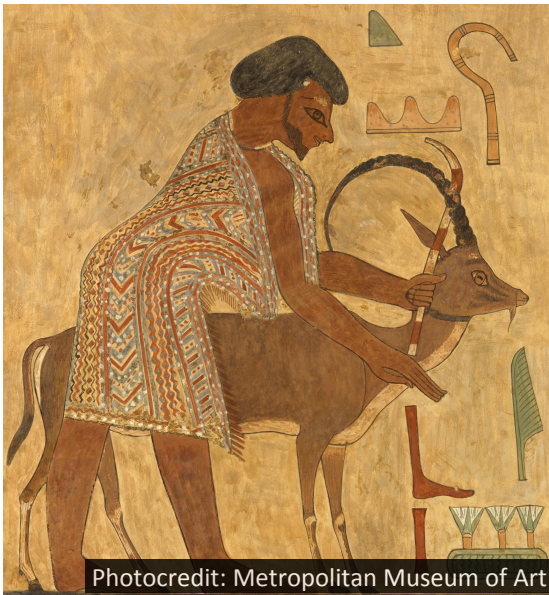
from a place of condemnation to a place of exaltation in Pharaoh's palace. Jesus upon his resurrection went from the condemnation of the cross to the exaltation of Heaven. Joseph began his service to Pharaoh at the age of thirty. Jesus began his ministry and service to God at the same age. In considering these things from the point of view of midrashic interpretation and attendant typology we can see the similarities between Jesus and Joseph to be striking. Pharaoh ensured that his people bowed the knee to Joseph (Genesis 41:43). God will ensure that every knee will bow to Jesus (Philippians 2:10). Joseph was accused by false testimony and thrown into prison, as was Jesus. Upon restoration and exaltation Joseph took a gentile bride, Potipherah's daughter Asenath; upon resurrection and exaltation so did Jesus who became the bridegroom of the church which is made up of 'neither Jew nor Greek.' Joseph was used by God to become the saviour of his immediate famine-stricken world (Egypt) and later that of all lands (Genesis 41:56). Jesus became the saviour of his immediate brothers and later of the whole world.

Joseph was not recognised by his brothers at his first coming to them in Egypt, but the second time they met, his brothers grieved (Genesis 45:5). Jesus was not recognised by his Jewish brothers at His first coming but, at the second, they too will grieve (Zechariah 12:10). I have not given a full account of the similarities between Jesus and Joseph as they are very many, but enough to show how they are closely linked together and how the life of Joseph points forward to Jesus. Perhaps as further accentuation to this and to draw our attention to the importance of Joseph as prefiguring Christ, Jesus is 'helped' into the world by another Joseph, Mary's husband. Furthermore, another Joseph is involved in His death, Joseph of Arimathea, purchaser and provider of a single linen cloth that was big enough to wrap a man in, 'And when Joseph had taken the body, he wrapped it in a clean linen cloth' (Mark 27:59).

It would certainly appear that many things in the life of Jesus point back to Joseph and from Joseph forward to Jesus. As a keen Shroud researcher I became interested in Joseph's life as recorded in Genesis. I believed I saw many unlikely similarities with the life of Jesus and sought

to discover if anything therein could help illuminate the question which puzzled me; 'Why a Shroud?'

Firstly I thought it odd that the Bible sees fit to record the detail of Joseph's coat. Why should a coat even be mentioned of a man whose lifestory is packed with so much? Rising as he did from being a humble shepherd boy to become Grand Vizier of all Egypt. Joseph's coloured coat



Photocredit: Metropolitan Museum of Art

may not even have been uncommon. The tomb paintings of Khnumhotep III at Beni Hasan which have been dated to the time of the Jewish patriarchs show Midianite caravaneers arriving in Egypt having gone there to trade. Many of the caravaneers, including women, are wearing multi-coloured coats. The appearance of Joseph's coat in the Genesis narrative informs that Joseph was Jacob's favourite son and the coat added to his brother's jealousy of him. The coat then

is testimony to Jacob's love for Joseph, 'And when his brethren saw that their father loved him more than all his brethren, they hated him and could not speak peaceably unto him' (Genesis 37:4). Joseph's dreams undoubtedly did nothing to help soothe the situation. Joseph's brethren, progenitors of all Israel to come, grew so jealous of their brother because of his favoured status they plotted to kill him at the earliest opportunity. Animosity towards their brother, jealousy and anger at the possibility that he may rule over them overthrew what love and affection the brothers possessed for Joseph. If we are to follow the truly impressive series of events that link Joseph to Jesus it is reasonable to investigate all things in

Joseph's life as potential types and foreshadows of the life of Christ. I am suggesting that we look at Joseph's coat as a possible 'type' or forerunner of what we have come to know as the Turin Shroud and I think this can be substantiated.

If we recall that Joseph's brothers killed a kid (over four hundred years later to become a regular sacrificial animal from Moses onwards) and bloodied Joseph's coat, presenting it to Jacob as 'proof' of Joseph's death to provide a cover for their guilt as Joseph was really alive but sold to the gentiles (Genesis 37:31), we might infer that God, in typological fashion, later returned the gesture by presenting to the Jews Christ's bloodied and image-bearing Shroud, proof of Jesus being alive when he was thought to be dead and Whom they too had handed over to gentiles, unwittingly making Jesus the ultimate scapegoat and the culmination of the sacrificial system. Jacob announced his love for his beloved son by making him a coat which was later marked with his blood, describing his brothers' pride, jealousy, anger and rejection of him. In this sense the comparisons between Joseph and Christ, and their garments may have reached their fulfilment in the Shroud of Turin. Is there anything further which might aid my suspicion that the Shroud has indeed been sent to the Jews via the life-events of Joseph and Jesus? We are informed that upon his release from prison and his exaltation that Joseph was 'arrayed in vestures of fine linen' (Genesis 41:40-42) and that Pharaoh told him 'only in the throne will I be greater than thou'. Jesus informed those at his trial that 'Hereafter shall the Son of man sit on the right hand of the power of God' (Luke 22:69) and upon His resurrection Jesus too was clothed with the 'fine linen' purchased by Joseph of Arimathea (Mark 15:46).

To conclude, the Shroud, just like the Gospel itself, is 'first to the Jew and then to the Gentile' having been found that Sunday morning by John and Peter. There is nothing of the Shroud of Turin that should cause enmity between either group. Indeed there is much that can be to the benefit of both, and reconcile both, remembering that in Christ there is 'neither Jew nor Greek'. This paper has been a short study of some of the amazing typological events in the lives of Jesus and Joseph and it is fitting

that it should end now with one more. Upon finally disclosing his identity to his brothers, Joseph 'wept aloud: and the Egyptians and the house of Pharaoh heard'. Joseph then reassured his brothers who were in fear for their lives saying 'it was not you that sent me hither, but God' (Genesis 45:2-8). Joseph had understood that the events of his life, even his brother's anger, jealousy and rejection were all used to bring about God's desired ends even to the forgiveness and saving of his brothers' lives. So too will it be in what is to yet take place between Jesus and the Jews. They too are to come face to face with Him they sought to destroy. The Gospel, and I believe the evidence of the Shroud bears witness to that.

References for 'Why A Shroud?'

- 1) The Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam, Edward Fitzgerald, 1889,
- 2) Pattern, not Just Prediction: Midrash Hermeneutics, Chuck Missler, 2001, at <http://www.khouse.org/articles/2001/341/>

Scripture quotations are from the Authorised Version of The Holy Bible

